

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 19, 21, 22, 24 and 32 are amended, claims 20 and 23 are canceled, and new claims 46-57 are added. Accordingly, claims 19, 21-22 and 24-57 are pending in this application. No new matter is added.

Prior to filing the attached Request for Continued Examination, claims 26-31 and 42-44 were allowed and claims 20-22, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41 and 45 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Claims 19, 23-25, 32-34, 36 and 39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Miyaji et al. in view of Chiba et al. and further in view of Klebanoff et al.

This rejection is moot with respect to canceled claim 23 and is respectfully traversed with respect to the remaining claims.

Independent claim 19 is amended to substantially recite the subject matter recited in original claim 20. As acknowledged by the January 7, 2003 Office Action, none of the references of record, individually or in combination, disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature of replacing a gas while adjusting an exhaust amount of the gas so that deformation of a protection member is within a predetermined range.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 19 is patentable over Miyaji et al., Chiba et al. and Klebanoff et al. Further, it is respectfully submitted that claims 21-22 are patentable at least in view of the patentability of claim 19 from which they depend, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Independent claim 24 recites *inter alia* "controlling deformation of said protection member to within a predetermined range while replacing the gas in said predetermined space with said predetermined gas." Independent claim 32 recites *inter alia* "a control apparatus which is connected to said gas replacement apparatus and controls said gas replacement apparatus so that deformation of said protection member is within a predetermined range." At least for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 19, it is respectfully submitted

that none of the references of record, individually or in combination, disclose, teach or suggest these claimed features.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 24 and 32 are patentable over Miyaji et al., Chiba et al. and Klebanoff et al. Further, it is respectfully submitted that claims 25, 33, 34, 36 and 39 are patentable at least in view of the patentability of claims 24 and 32 from which they respectively depend, as well as for the additional features they recite.

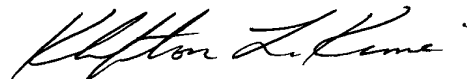
Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

New independent claim 46 recites *inter alia* "controlling deformation of said protection member to within a predetermined range while replacing the gas in said predetermined space with said predetermined gas." New independent claim 52 recites *inter alia* "a control apparatus which is connected to said gas replacement apparatus and controls said gas replacement apparatus so that deformation of said protection member is within a predetermined range." At least for the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that new claims 46-57 are patentable over the references of record.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 19, 21-22 and 24-57 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

Request for Continued Examination
Petition for Extension of Time
Amendment Transmittal

Date: June 9, 2003

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